Cryptozoology, 9, 1990, 85–87
© 1990 International Society of Cryptozoology

BCSCC REPORT ON OKANAGAN LAKE, 1990

JOHN KIRK
1194 Robson Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V6E 1B2, Canada

INTRODUCTION

The British Columbia Cryptozoology Club (BCCC) underwent a name change in 1990 when it became the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club (BCSCC). The reason for the change was more than cosmetic. Some pseudo-cryptozoological groups are springing up across North America, and the Club executive decided that, by stressing the scientific tack that the Club has taken in the past, no connection with groups involved in paranormal or occultic activities would be made.

The Club has recently been involved in fieldwork pertaining to Ogopogo, a supposed "lake monster" which inhabits Okanagan Lake, a body of water 79 miles (127 km) in length in southern British Columbia. In past years, Club members have obtained several sightings and videotape sequences of the animals which, as yet, have not been classified scientifically. In 1990, fieldwork at the lake was conducted from August 4 to 29. The participants were John Kirk, John Kirk Jr., Kenneth Shauntz, Andrew Shauntz, and Kenji Chono—a visiting cryptozoology enthusiast from Osaka, Japan.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Initial observations commenced at Knox Mountain, Kelowna, where superb views of northern sectors of the lake are possible. Sunny skies and the absence of any significant heat haze allowed the BCSCC team to scan the lake for two hours. At approximately 3:30 p.m., the participants noted a large disturbance in the waters below their vantage point, near Bear Creek. Something below the surface was creating large patches of white water, which were about 15 feet (4.5 m) across. Several boaters in the vicinity also sighted the disturbances, but neither they nor the expedition members were able to see what was causing them. Following this occurence, the team moved to a small beach on the Kelowna lakeshore, where views from the Okanagan Mission in the south to the Okanagan Lake floating bridge in the north are possible. Heavy boat traffic in the area may have prevented any sightings from taking place.

On August 5, the Club participants patrolled the lake surface from a motorboat, taking in the area between Peachland and Kelowna. At approximately 2:15 p.m., John Kirk Sr. and Andrew Shauntz simultaneously spotted a 15-foot (4.5 m)-long object floating about 45 feet (13.6 m) behind another boat some 200–250 yards (180–230 m) away. The sun was shining off the back of what appeared to be a living animal. Its coloration was similar

to that of a peeled log; slight movement was detected. Shauntz gunned the engine of the vessel in an attempt to get closer to the object. However, the object submerged, and, upon arrival at its location, nothing was found. The occupants of the other boat were questioned as to whether they had seen the animal, but they had not been looking in that direction, and had seen nothing. No further sightings were obtained that day.

The following morning saw the team station themselves at Okanagan Lake Provincial Park, just north of Summerland. The field workers spent several hours photographing the lake from a small beachfront. Following this exercise, the team relocated to the Ogopogo viewpoint, across from Squally Point, to carry out more observation tasks. At approximately 11:30 a.m., a large group of waterfowl was seen to be agitated by something just below the surface which was heading towards them from about 100 yards (91 m) away. A large shadow was seen to be approaching the birds, which took off in what seemed to be pure fright. The BCSCC group watched the shadowy mass move further into deep water before it was lost to view. There is a possibility that this was not an Ogopogo-type animal, and could have been a sturgeon. However, the British Columbia provincial government has insisted that there are no sturgeon in the lake. No conclusion has been drawn from this episode.

While most members of the fieldwork group had to return to Vancouver after several days at the lake, Kenji Chono remained for a total of 29 days, but without obtaining any further sightings.

Results

Other than the single sighting of the animal on August 5, the expedition was a rather unsuccessful venture, which was complicated by the large number of boats on the lake; the occupants of these boats haphazardly traverse the surface with little or no regard for others. Large patches of oil were seen from leaking motors, which would no doubt cause a problem in keeping the lake habitable for a population of large animals.

Also at the lake during the summer of 1990 was a team from the Nippon Television Network, which despatched a six-boat flotilla in search of Ogopogo. This team sent divers into the lake with underwater photography equipment, and they kept the surface of the lake under surveillance with several other camera crews. One sequence was acquired which the TV crew took to be Ogopogo, but following scrutiny by John Kirk, Paul Leblond, and other faculty of the Department of Oceanography at the University of British Columbia, it was determined that the footage showed nothing more than a converging wave.

However, the Nippon Television team was accompanied by CKIQ radio news director Mike Gussi, who obtained an image of a 30-foot (9.1 m)-long animate object swimming in 320 feet (97 m) of water on his fishfinder. Following inspection by John Kirk and others, it was thought that the image was not of a fish, but of some unknown animal.

Although Nippon TV and the BCSCC were not blessed with clear sightings, several others were more fortunate. Ann and Richard Kline were looking out of their Kelowna home at 10:30 a.m. on July 17 when they spotted a 30-foot (9 m)-long animal with a horse-like head and several humps swimming across the lake in the direction of Westbank. Ann Kline described what appeared to be ears or protrusions emanating from the animal's head, and described its coloration as dark. Approximately one hour later, Bob Pearson and an unidentified friend also sighted the animal in the same area. It reportedly surface on the south side of the Okanagan Lake floating bridge and swam southwards, with several sections of its body appearing above the surface.

On August 13, Mike and Tina Paskal were relaxing aboard their ski-boat just south of Vernon, near Okanagan Landing, when a 60-foot (18 m)-long animal surfaced very close to their craft. Tina Paskal was so shocked she dropped her baby onto the floor of their boat. Mike Paskal had just enough time to grab his still camera and take several pictures of the animal, one of which reportedly shows a large protrusion which resembles part of a whale's back. Efforts to contact Paskal to obtain permission to reproduce his photograph in this journal have proven fruitless.

Future Plans

Both BCSCC and Nippon Television have begun plans to intensify their searches at Okanagan Lake in 1991. There is the possibility that NTV will enlist the aid of BCSCC members, and make use of their knowledge of areas where the animals are more likely to be sighted. It is envisioned that a subsurface vehicle will be used, as well as several remotely operated vehicles (ROV's) and teams of divers. This would make the venture the largest expedition ever mounted in pursuit of the still-elusive Ogopogo.